Russians can contract for the remaining quantity of 10,000 Mts. of tobacco within the calender year 1992 in terms of the protocol.

Speed Post Facility

116. SHRI BHADRESWAR GOHAIN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have given their permission to carry mails by night superfast buses;

(b) whehter Government propose to introduce speed post facilities to more areas in Assam; and

(c) if so, what are the names of the places to be covered by speed post facilities?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Introducton of Speed Post Service to new areas is an on going process. As and when a proposal is received, the same is examined keeping in view commercial and market viability.

Cartel of suppliers of Silver Plated Contacts of Telecom Factory in Calcutta

117. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the suppliers of Silver plated contacts to telecom factory, Calcutta have formed a group in response to the factory's tender and offered a simple price for the material;

(b) whether the sanctity of the tender has been defeated;

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to discourage cartel amongst the suppliers; and

(d) what are the facts and details thereof?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) No Sir, there was no cartel formation in this case as the price bids of the tenderers were not all identical.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) As and when cartel formation is noticed, the entire process of tendering is done afresh.

(d) Does not arise.

Post Offices and Telephone facility to the Villages

118. SHRI SHANTI TYAGI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1904 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 10th March, 1992 and state:

(a) what is the number of villages that were without a post office at the end of the financial year 1991-92;

(b) what is the number of villages having telephone facility in the country; and

(c) what are the plans of Government to cover rural India by the network of telecommunication during the Eighth Five Year Plan period?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) As per the latest information available, there are 478250 villages without post offices in the country.

(b) As on 31-3-92, there were 75257 villages having telephone facility in the country.

(c) During the Eighth Five Year Plan period, the Government propose to :—

(1) to provide telephone facility to all Gram Panchayats and an additional 1.5 lakhs other villages dur-